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**State Fire Marshal and NFPA Urge the Public to
“Be Smart! Leave the Fireworks to the Pros”**

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) President James M. Shannon today hosted a press conference with members of the medical, fire and law enforcement communities to raise awareness of the dangers of consumer fireworks. These participants are working together to encourage the public to “Be smart! Leave the fireworks to the professionals,” and to enjoy a safe and happy July 4th holiday.

Coan said, “Don’t be fooled by deceptive advertising. There is no such thing as a safe or sane firework no matter how pretty or patriotic the packaging or marketing campaign. Yet the industry continues to encourage untrained adults and children to handle unpredictable explosives that can be set off by heat, shock or friction.”

“There is simply no safe way to use consumer fireworks,” said James M. Shannon, president of NFPA, a founding member of the Alliance to Stop Consumer Fireworks. “People should leave fireworks to the professionals and celebrate our nation’s birthday by enjoying professional displays put on by trained individuals.” NFPA announced the release of two new video PSAs available denouncing the use of consumer fireworks. They can be viewed at www.nfpa.org/fireworks.

Fire, Medical and Law Enforcement Unite

They were joined by Raymond Wee, M.D., Director of Eye Trauma at the Mass. Eye and Ear Infirmary, Dr. Colleen Ryan of the Sumner Redstone Burn Center at Mass. General Hospital and Shriners Hospital for Children, Chief Gerard A. Dio, president of the Fire Chiefs’ Association of Massachusetts, Capt. Barbara Stone, past-president of the Fire Prevention Association of Massachusetts, Lt. Kevin McMahon, executive officer, Fire and Explosion Investigation Section in the Office of the State Fire Marshal, and Erin Christiansen, Director of SAFE Kids Boston at the Boston Public Health Commission.

Administrative Services • Hazardous Materials Response
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These participants are working together to encourage the public to “Be smart! Leave the fireworks to the professionals,” and to enjoy a safe and happy July 4th holiday.

“Every year, thousands of eye injuries are caused by fireworks. Because they burn at a high temperature and travel at high rates of speed, fireworks can rupture, burn, cut, scrape and severely injure the eye, as well as the surrounding facial areas,” said Raymond Wee, M.D., Director of Eye Trauma at the Mass. Eye and Ear Infirmary.

Fireworks Send Over 3,000 children under 14 to Emergency Rooms Each Year

Dr. Colleen Ryan of Shriners Hospital for Children said, “Parents underestimate how dangerous fireworks can be. Fireworks send over 3,000 children under 14 to emergency rooms each year in the U.S.” She added, “With alcohol in the mix, a bunch of people and the dark, the Fourth of July is an incredible holiday to work the ER because of all the injuries that happen from fireworks, fire pits, and bon fires.”

4th of July No Holiday for Firefighters

Worcester Fire Chief Gerard Dio, president of the Fire Chiefs’ Association of Massachusetts said, “Traditionally, the Fourth of July has been one of the busiest days of the year for firefighters who, in many communities, provide both emergency medical services as well as fire suppression.” He added, “The illegal use of fireworks by amateurs, bon fires, backyard barbecues gone haywire, lawnmowers refueled while the engine is still hot, and overheating cars mean that the Fourth of July is no holiday for firefighters.”

Set a Good Example

Capt. Barbara Stone, past-president of the Fire Prevention Association of Massachusetts said, “Prevention of fireworks injuries starts when responsible adults set a good example and leave the fireworks to the professionals.” She added, “Children and teenagers know where adults keep the fireworks, and when they see adults use them without injury, wrongly believe then can too.”

Fireworks Are Not Toys

Erin Christiansen, director of SAFE Kids Boston at the Boston Public Health Commission said, “When attending professional firework displays in the community, remember to keep all children under active supervision – in sight and in reach at all times.” She added, “Children should not play with sparklers for the same reason they should not play with matches and lighters. Both activities can lead to serious burns.”

Fireworks Caused Over \$1.5 Million in Losses in Past Decade

In the past decade (1998-2007) Massachusetts has experienced 677 major fires and explosions from fireworks causing one death, 15 civilian injuries, nine fire service injuries and nearly \$1.5 million in property loss — all in a state where consumer fireworks are illegal. A majority of these incidents took place during the week of the Fourth of July holiday.

1/3 of Fireworks Burn Injuries to Children 10-14

Over the same period, the state's burn registry reported 42 people were treated at Massachusetts emergency rooms for severe burn injuries from fireworks – burns covering 5% or more of the body. Nearly 70% of these victims were people under age 18 and one-third were between 10 and 14 years old. During the last 10 years the oldest reported person injured by fireworks was a 47-year old man and the youngest was a little boy less than one-year old.

Fireworks Are Illegal Except for Licensed Professionals

State Police Lt. Kevin J. McMahon, Executive Officer in the Fire and Explosion Investigation Unit assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal said, "The possession and use of all fireworks by private citizens is illegal in Massachusetts. This includes Class C fireworks, which are sometimes falsely called 'safe and sane.' Examples of these are sparklers, party poppers, snappers, firecrackers, and spinners." He noted that the teens involved in firesetting and bomb making frequently use the contents of class C fireworks to build their explosive devices. A Swampscott teen recently lost two fingers in just such an incident.

Illegal to Bring Fireworks into Massachusetts from Out-of-State

It is illegal to purchase fireworks in another state such as New Hampshire or Connecticut, and to then transport them into Massachusetts. Advertisers cannot be prohibited from advertising fireworks, but it is illegal to purchase fireworks through catalogues or over the Internet for delivery in this state. Many unhappy consumers have lost both their money and fireworks trying to circumvent the law. State Fire Marshal Coan said, "Play it safe and enjoy the many professional, supervised displays across the state this holiday week!"

Demonstration of Danger

Just how lethal fireworks can be, was shown in a startling demonstration conducted by the State Police Bomb Squad assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal. Fireworks, typical of those confiscated by law enforcement authorities, were attached to mannequins. The damage done was shocking as spectators were asked to imagine how much worse the damage would be to a child's body. Also shown, was how quickly a sparkler can ignite the sleeve of children's clothing, and the damage aerial fireworks can do when their flight path encounters a human face and eyes.